Magazine Features

The Daily Colonist.

(ESTABLISHED 1858)

Third Section

NO. 157—SEVENTY-NINTH YEAR VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 1937

Victoria Boys Go Native

By J. K. UNSWORTH

CAMP OFFICE and HEADQUARTERS

George Bennell

The TENT LINES from the LAKE

1936 CAMPERS

GLINZ LAKE VIEWED from the CAMP OFFICE

FOR three glorious weeks next month, for a score of never-to-be-forgotten days and nights, a bunch of Victoria boys will go native at Glinz Lake, in the Sooke Hills. For them, the freedom of the great outdoors. For them, a long happy period in the fir-fringed spaces at the foot of Mount Shepherd.

The early morning birds will twitter over the tents where they lie in dreamless sleep. Then clangs the bell, and the swiftly moving day has begun. A plunge in the lake, breakfast for ravenous appetites, games, swimming, woodcraft, hikes, and the thousand and one things that camping brings. Why, folks never really live until they go a-camping—no boy at any rate.

The day closes with the campfire. What man ever forgets the first campfire of his boyhood? Over the succeeding campings of his later youth and of his adult holidays rests a glamour that makes him wish, as the sun of his life glides towards the western horizon, that he were a boy again.

As dusk draws near and the bronze hues are fading over the tree tops, the match is touched to the resinous bits of kindling. The blaze grows, spreads, and soon it has wrapped the pile in its flaming embrace and thrusts quivering forks of flame against the shadows of the surrounding night. Flocks of sparks fly upward as the evening's supply of fuel is thrown upon the pyre. By and by the flames die down to a bed of glowing coals; then the covered embers and good night. Whoever has never experienced the charm of a campfire has missed a lot.

Blessings on the man who invented fire. Nobody knows who he was, and it is altogether likely that there were hundreds of such benefactors of mankind. Grecian mythology ascribed it, as you know, to Prometheus, who lighted a torch at the sun's chariot. Poor Promethus, the gods punished him badly for it. A North American legend states that a buffalo gave fire to man. Racing across the plains at night, he lighted up the darkness with sparks and set the bush ablaze as his hoofs hit the rocks.

Around the Campfire

BUT we must not burden this story with information gleaned from the Encyclopedia Britannica, or we shall never get back to the boys camping at Glinz Lake, one thousand feet up among the Sooke Hills. The big thing about a camp is the campfire. What would life in the great outdoors be without its nightly blaze, even if it is but a petty thing compounded of a few chips gathered from the seashore? But in the Sooke Hills there is brush aplenty for a monster bonfire—provided fire regulations are duly kept.

Let's stay around the campfire for a while. Here is where the Victoria boys go native. Here primitive instincts that have been pased down through immemorial aeons of humanity's long life surge up. The boy may not philosophize about it, but he is obeying the urge of his savage ancestors in primeval times. The fact is, humanity, taking a long view of history, has lived outdoors more than it has sheltered itself within four walls. Indoor life is a late development. The boy's insistent demand for camping out is natural: it is an age-old habit calling for expression.

And as for the campfire, the ethnologists surmise that the upward progress of the human race began whenever and wherever it happened on fire. They picture the primitive man, he of the Paleolithic age, as he squats, along with his mate and their progeny, about this strange living thing he has discovered. Here is found the first social group. Then came larger groups, still meeting around the campfire. Then the tribe, with its rites and ceremonies, all centring around the blazing logs of the forest. This is the theory of ethnologists. You can take it or leave it, as you wish.

Anyway, directors of camps say that there is nothing about a camp that gets so deeply into a boy's nature as the hour or two spent under the stars around the campfire. Many a noble resolve has been made under the spell of the fellowship engendered there, a comradeship brought to its best through the subtle guidance of wise leaders.

Addressing himself to boys' leaders, one man has written: "It is fun to sit about the open fire and spin yarns, or watch in silence the glowing embers; but the greatest fun of all is to win the love and confidence of some boy who has been a trouble to himself and everybody else, and help him to become a man."

Camping Since 1881

THE formal camping idea was started on this continent by one Ernest Balch about 1881. This was the beginning of so-called private camps for boys. The idea was slow in taking hold, for the record gives only about twenty-three camps in 1900. In 1903 girls' camps came into being and grew more rapidly than the boys' camps. In two decades they had grown to over two hundred, while the boys' Summer centres after forty-five years numbered only three hundred and fifteen.

With the year 1911 a new day in camping began. In that year the Camp Directors' Association of North America was formed, and in 1916 the kindred association for girls' camps was born. Today there are no fewer than one thousand private camps, with an attendance of at least seventy-five thousand boys and girls each Summer.

The LEADERS

Left to Right—Front Row: Ernest Bishop, Vivian Shoemaker (Director), Middle Row: Lynn Patrick, Lorne McGregor, Grant Paterson, Bernard Ennals. Back Row: Frank Hyslop, Jack Allison, Ralph Dent.

So widely has this movement spread that there is no province nor state without its camps and campfires. They are handled by the Scouts, the Campfire Girls, Woodcraft Leagues, service clubs, churches, and especially by the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations.

The Y.M.C.A. was the pioneer. It held its first camp in 1885, now more than fifty years ago. It was organized by Sumner F. Dudley at Orange Lake, with an attendance of seven. In 1934 the American associations operated 1,165 camps, with over 126,000 campers. In Canada last year forty-eight camps accommodated 8,506 campers, and camps are held in all countries in which the Y.M.C.A. operates.

The Victoria Y.M.C.A. has a fine camping record. For over thirty years camping was the main feature of its Summer programme. In that period a number of sites were used—Orcas Island, Patricia Bay, Gorge Park, Beaver Lake, Mathieson Lake, Sooke Harbor, and now Glinz Lake, and the latest is the best. The period of greatest activity was that of Beaver Lake, where the camp was held on city property from 1919 to 1929. A fine dining hall provided by the Rotary Club was its attractive centre. This site was made untenable by the opening of Beaver Lake as a public park.

Glinz Lake Ideal

AFTER years of search, the ideal camping spot has been found and purchased. Glinz Lake seems to have all the qualities required for a boys' camp—and girls' camp also. Every item checks up 100 per cent. Three hundred and twenty acres of virgin forest among the Sooke Hills encompass a lake of fifteen acres area. It is only twenty-two miles from Victoria, twenty of which are paved road and the last two Government gazetted dirt road. It is two miles from the highway and practically at the end of the road.

Readily accessible, the camp is buried in the heart of the forest. Not far from the sea, it is 1,000 feet above sea level. The lake provides excellent bathing, with a beach and diving board. The water is pure and has passed the test of the Provincial Health Department. The site has been occupied but one year and is still in the rough. But the Y.M.C.A. owns it—though not paid for—and all kinds of improvements lie ahead for the boys of the coming generations. Every Summer's group will pass on a better camp to those who follow.

The writer is sure that some of the readers of this sketch have long before this recalled the fact that King George is a camper. A sailor he is, but he is better known as a landsman. Thousands of English boys have gone a-camping with the Duke of York. He puts on no side: he was one of them. Attired in slacks and sweater, he lived the outdoor life like the rest, and felt entirely at home. Not caring for public life on account of the shyness that was for years upon him, it is not unlikely that his happiest days away from his own home were with his camping comrades. All this he must give up now that he has become King. For kings clad in slacks and sweaters cannot sport around with apprentice lads from English factories.

International Camps

CAMPS in Canada, camps in the United States, camps in England, camps in Finland camps in Japan. Wherever the Y.M.C.A. has a foothold, it gets boys and young men out into the great outdoors. "Camping is as old as the hills," writes the editor of World Youth. "Today the camp has been rediscovered and is being used to recreate for youth some of the values which have been lost, love of Nature, the art of living simply, and of hearing the voice of God in the quiet of out-of-doors."

The distinctive feature of the world Y.M.C.A. camps is their internationalism. The English camp is not for the English-speaking alone, nor that in Finland for the Finns alone, nor this Summer's camp at Yamanaka Lake, Japan, that faces majestic Mount Fuji, for Japanese only.

Education in the international temper has been one of the objectives of the several score of international and regional groups that have been promoted during the past twelve years from the World Alliance of the Y.M.C.A., with headquarters at Geneva. For the first time in history these groups have drawn together older boys of many nations, of every color, divers tongues, varied and often antagonistic races and nationalities, to spend a period in the intimacies of camp life. The Y.M.C.A. is capitalizing its almost ecumenical range in the interests of fraternity.

Vaumarus in Switzerland, Helsingfors in Finland (at which British Columbia youth was represented), Windsor Forest in England, Szigliget in Hungary, Gotland in Sweden, Sazawa in Czechoslovakia, and Unzen in Japan, indicate the widespread variety of locale. In the Summer of 1930 four international camps were held, in Belgium, Germany, Denmark and Scotland.

Many Nationals Meet

THE youth of thirteen countries met in Japan, of twenty countries at Windsor Forest, and at Szigliget, Hungary, there were ninety-seven boys, drawn from the following eleven nations: Hungarian, Jugoslav, Czech, Polish, German, Austrian, Rumanian, Italian, Dutch, American and Swiss.

At every campfire there, if the talk was in German, which was the language used in the Hungarian camp, simultaneous translations went on in Polish, Czech, Jugoslav, Hungarian, English and French. Here, too, were Catholics and Orthodox Christians, as well as Protestants. Variety in unity was realized.

One of the objects of these international camps is to help boys appreciate the great values which are inherent in different national cultures. Boys of half a dozen nationalities, living in the same tent for a fortnight, learn from each other. National games are demonstrated. Americans learn sclagball from the Germans, and Germans learn baseball from its North American exponents. Scandinavians are led into the intricacies of cricket.

All swim and eat together. The dinner table tends to obliterate racial diversities. National pageants and plays are put on. All unite in singing the various national anthems and folk songs. Hymns of one Christian faith blend into racial and ecclesiastical groups. Immersed in a Christian atmosphere and under the charm of the campfire, teammates become lifelong friends, with a new spirit in facing international problems.

Pacific Area Camp

TOWARDS bringing about a better understanding among the older boys of the Pacific area, the International Pacific Camp will be held in August at Yamanaka Lake, in sight of the beautiful Mount Fuji. Inaugurated at Unzen, Japan, in 1929, the second Pacific Camp was held in the Hawaiian Islands, the third at Tsingtau, China, the fourth in the Philippines, and this year the fraternity of the peoples of the Pacific Ocean will be entertained by their Nipponese fellow-Christians.

Note the lands from which the one hundred and twenty leaders and delegates come: Japan, China, Korea, Philippines, United States of America, Canada, Siam, Singapore, India, Australia and New Zealand.

Note, too, the purpose: To help boys appreciate the values of different national cultures; to share ideas and ideals making for a better understanding among the peo-

(Continued on Page 6)